

**LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:****May 18, 1998**

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**LAST WEEK:**

**NRCS' SMALL WATERSHED PROGRAM** - On Tuesday, the Water Resources and Environment Subcommittee (Chairman Boehlert, R-NY) of House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee held a hearing on the NRCS' Small Watershed Program and proposed projects. NRCS Deputy Chief for Programs, Larry Clark discussed two projects which are currently pending approval of the Subcommittee -- the Upper Delaware River Watershed (Kansas); and the East Fork of the Grand River (Iowa/Missouri). Mr. Clark stated the proposed projects, and the P.L. 566 program in general offer many environmental, economic, and social benefits. He also pointed out to the Subcommittee, that many watershed structures are nearing the end of their expected service life. He pointed out the need to provide ongoing technical assistance and to educate communities about operation and maintenance responsibilities.

**EPA REGULATIONS ON ANIMAL WASTE MANAGEMENT** - On Wednesday, the Forestry, Resource Conservation, and Research Subcommittee (Chairman Larry Combest R-TX) and the Livestock, Dairy and Poultry Subcommittee (Chairman Richard Pombo R-CA) of the House Agriculture Committee held a joint hearing on how Environmental Protection Agency regulations on concentrated animal feeding operations may affect small operators. Witnesses included NRCS Chief, Pearlie Reed; Michael Cook and Elaine Stanley from EPA, John Baker of the Texas Natural Resources Commission, and Peter Rooney of the California Environmental Protection Agency. Rep. Combest opened the hearing by stating his concern that the appropriate research and science is being applied to development of animal agriculture policy. Rep. Pombo echoed these concerns and also stated that regulators need to recognize the realities of farming.

Chief Reed stated that nutrient management related to large livestock operations is a major concern. He outlined how USDA and specifically NRCS is contributing toward solutions with data resources and technical assistance. He said that an investment must be made in the technical and financial resources geared to help producers and added that policy on animal agriculture must be rooted in good science and common sense. The Chief completed his remarks by stating that EPA and USDA should work together to establish a clear and consistent policy, so that farmers know what is expected.

Mike Cook of EPA stated that while many gains have been made in correcting point-source pollution recent years, much more needs to be done on non-point source problems. He said that agriculture is identified as one of the foremost polluter of America's waterways. Questions by the committee centered upon the lack of enforcement of existing regulations. Many members felt that current regulations should be implemented before being amended. Other questions focused upon the release of information which affects farmers private property rights.

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**THIS WEEK:**

**AQUATIC TOXINS** - Oceans and Fisheries Subcommittee (Chairman Snowe, R-Maine) of Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee will hold a hearing on algal blooms, including blooms of *Pfiesteria piscicida* and other aquatic toxins, that can cause substantial environmental and economic damage.

May 20            9:30AM            SR-253 Russell Bldg.

Agenda:

S 1480 - A bill to authorize appropriations for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration to conduct research, monitoring, education and management activities for the eradication and control of harmful algal blooms, including blooms of *Pfiesteria piscicida* and other aquatic toxins.

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**LOOKING AHEAD:**

**MEMORIAL DAY RECESS** - Both the House and Senate will be out of session for the week of May 25th in observance of the Memorial Day holiday. Congress is scheduled to reconvene on June 1st.

**BUDGET/APPROPRIATIONS MARKUPS** - With approximately four months left in Fiscal Year 1998, Congress will likely move on several budget related measures in the coming weeks. Foremost is the Budget Resolution for Fiscal Year 1999. At this stage, leaders in each chamber have discussed budget drafts but have not moved legislation to the floor for consideration. Regardless of action on the Budget, appropriators are expected to mark-up appropriation bills beginning in the first week of June. The Senate has already provided each appropriations subcommittee with an allocations. The amount for agriculture is consistent with that requested by the President.

**LIVESTOCK ISSUES** - Senate Agriculture, Nutrition and Forestry Committee (Chairman Lugar, R-Ind.) will hold a hearing on livestock issues including demand, overseas development, pricing, industry structuring and other related subjects.

June 10            9AM            SR-328A Russell Bldg.

**METHYL BROMIDE PHASE-OUT** - Forestry, Resource Conservation, and Research Subcommittee (Chairman Combest, R-Texas) of House Agriculture Committee will hold a hearing on the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) phase-out of methyl bromide, an ozone-depleting pesticide used to control insects, nematodes, weeds, pathogens, and rodents.

June 10            10AM            1300 Longworth Bldg.

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